

SESSION I.
1921.
NEW ZEALAND.

NORTH AUCKLAND RAILWAY ROUTES COMMISSION
(REPORT OF).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

COMMISSION.

NORTH AUCKLAND MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY (TE TIO NORTHWARDS), AND CONNECTING LINE FROM THE KAIHU VALLEY RAILWAY TO THE NORTH AUCKLAND MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY.

JELlicoe, Governor-General.

To all to whom these presents shall come, and to WILLIAM FERGUSON, Esquire, of Wellington, Civil Engineer; JOHN BIRD HINE, Esquire, of Toko, Farmer; and JAMES BEGG, Esquire, of Dunedin, Farmer: Greeting.

WHEREAS the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway (Kawakawa-Hokianga) has been authorized by the Railways Authorization Act, 1911, to a point near Horeke, and it is desirable to ascertain the best route for such railway from a point near Te Tio northwards:

And whereas it is also desirable to ascertain the best route for connecting the existing Kaihu Valley Railway with the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway as authorized by various Railways Authorization Acts:

Now, therefore, know ye that I, John Rushworth, Viscount Jellicoe, Governor-General of the Dominion of New Zealand, reposing trust and confidence in your knowledge, integrity, and ability, and acting by and with the advice and consent of the Executive Council of the said Dominion, do hereby, in exercise of the powers conferred on me by the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1908, and of all other powers and authorities enabling me in this behalf, constitute and appoint you, the said

WILLIAM FERGUSON,
JOHN BIRD HINE, and
JAMES BEGG,

to be a Commission for the purpose of making inquiry into the matters following, that is to say:—

- (1.) To inquire into and ascertain the best route along which the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway from Te Tio northwards should be constructed in the interests of the community as a whole, giving due consideration to the development of settlement, engineering questions, and the volume and direction of traffic.
- (2.) To inquire into and to ascertain the best route along which a railway connecting the Kaihu Valley Railway with the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway should be constructed in the interests of settlement, and giving due consideration to engineering questions and the volume and direction of traffic.
- (3.) To inquire into and to ascertain with what port or ports the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway northwards of Te Tio should be connected, and the extent to which such railway should now be constructed in the interests of settlement.
- (4.) And, generally, to make inquiry into any matter or thing which arises out of or is connected with the subjects of inquiry hereinbefore mentioned, or which in your opinion may be of assistance, in fully ascertaining, explaining, and arriving at a fair and just conclusion in respect of the subjects of inquiry.

And, with the like advice and consent, I do hereby appoint you, the said

WILLIAM FERGUSON,

to be Chairman of the said Commission.

And for the better enabling you to carry these presents into effect you are hereby empowered and authorized to make and conduct any inquiry under these presents, and at such place or places in the said Dominion as you may deem expedient, with power to adjourn from time to time and from place to place as you think fit, and to call before you and examine on oath, or otherwise as may be allowed by law, such person or persons as you may think capable of affording you any information in the premises; and you are also hereby empowered to call for and examine all such books, documents, papers, maps, plans, accounts, or records as you shall judge likely to afford you the fullest information on the subject of this Commission, and to inquire of and concerning the premises by all other lawful ways and means whatsoever.

And, using all diligence, you are required to report to me under your hands and seals your opinion resulting from the said inquiry in respect of the several matters and things inquired into by you, or by virtue of these presents, not later than the thirty-first day of January, one thousand nine hundred and twenty-one, with power to certify unto me from time to time your several proceedings in respect of any of the matters aforesaid, if it may seem expedient for you to do so.

And it is hereby declared that these presents shall continue in full force and virtue although the inquiry is not regularly continued from time to time or from place to place by adjournments.

And it is hereby declared that these presents are issued under and subject to the provisions of the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1908.

Given under the hand of His Excellency the Governor-General of the Dominion of New Zealand; and issued under the Seal of that Dominion, at the Government House at Wellington, this twenty-sixth day of October, one thousand nine hundred and twenty.

J. G. COATES,
Minister of Public Works.

Issued in Executive Council.

F. D. THOMSON,
Clerk of the Executive Council.

REPORT.

To His Excellency Viscount Jellicoe, Governor-General of the Dominion of New Zealand.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the Commissioners appointed by Your Excellency to inquire into the several matters and things mentioned and referred to in the Commission, a copy of which is attached hereto, have the honour to report as follows :—

We held our first meeting in Wellington on Friday, the 19th November, 1920, when preliminary evidence was given on behalf of the Public Works Department, and plans of the various routes proposed by the Department for our consideration were submitted and studied.

We left Wellington on Sunday, the 21st November, and, having taken evidence at Auckland, subsequently visited and heard evidence at Dargaville, Paparoa, Whangarei, Kohukohu, Rawene, Broadwood, Herekino, Kaitaia, Victoria Valley, Peria, Mangonui, Whangaroa, and Kawakawa. In addition to the sworn evidence received, the members of the Commission interviewed a large number of persons, including officers of the Public Works Department and of local bodies, from whom they obtained advice and opinions on the subject of the inquiry.

The Commission arrived in Wellington on Thursday, the 16th December, when further consultations were held with departmental officers; and a final meeting was held in Wellington on Saturday, the 15th January, 1921.

In addition to visiting the places at which evidence was taken, the Commission travelled, as far as it was practicable, either over the routes of the railways suggested or over so much of the country as enabled it to form a sound judgment as to the character of the land through which the railway-lines were proposed to be taken, and also as to the producing-capacity of the areas to be served by the proposed lines. Amongst other places visited in the course of this portion of its proceedings were Pukehuia, Tangowahine, Tangiteroria, Pohoatua, Ruawai, Raupo, Matakohē, Arapohue, Mangarata, Horeke, Rangiahua, Mangamuka, Port Awanui, Unahi, Takahue, Taipa, Otangaroa, Kaeo, Opuā, Oakleigh, Waikiekie, and Waiotira Junction.

RAILWAY ROUTES : DARGAVILLE—MAIN TRUNK.

The inquiry may be divided into two portions; and we propose to deal first with the point referred to in the second paragraph of the order of reference, wherein the duty is placed on us of inquiring into and ascertaining the best route along which a railway connecting the Kaihu Valley Railway with the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway should be constructed in the interests of settlement, whilst giving due consideration to engineering questions and the volume and direction of traffic.

Four suggestions have been made in connection with this branch of the inquiry: the first (see route coloured red on the plan and shown as numbered 1) that a railway-line should be carried to the northward of the Wairoa River from Dargaville to Kirikopuni, which route was submitted to us with two alternative deviations, shown on the plan as numbered 2 in red dotted lines.

The second proposal (coloured blue on the plan and shown as numbered 3) connects Dargaville with Pukehuia, on the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway, by a line crossing the Wairoa River above Dargaville and thence continuing on the south side of the river to the point where it joins the Main Trunk Railway at Pukehuia. An alternative route to this line was suggested and has been investigated (shown in dotted blue lines and numbered 4).

The third proposal (coloured green on the plan and shown as route numbered 5) involves a bridge crossing the Wairoa River at Dargaville; and the railway, traversing the valley of the Mangonui River, would join the Main Trunk Railway at a point about 113 miles on the railage of that authorized railway.

The fourth proposed line (coloured purple on the plan and shown as route numbered 6) also crosses the Wairoa River by a bridge at Dargaville, and runs on

flattish land closely adjacent to the lower reaches of the Wairoa River to Tokatōka, and thence across the Raupo and Ruawai Flats, and passes onwards through some difficult country to the upper reaches of the Arapaoa Branch of the Kaipara Harbour until it joins the Main Trunk line at Paparoa Station, about ninety-two miles on the Main Trunk Railway mileage.

These routes are shown on the plan accompanying this report.

The fifth and sixth routes have this disadvantage: they require heavy bridge-construction at Dargaville, and in order to preserve the navigation of the upper reaches of the Wairoa River a lifting-span would be required.

We dismiss the fifth route, as it runs through difficult country and does not serve to any great extent lands which in our opinion would warrant the expenditure of such a sum as would be required for its approximately sixteen miles of route as compared with the shorter routes adjacent to the Wairoa River. It also involves a junction with the Main Trunk line at a point only five miles and a half from the Waiotira Junction, and we believe it would be inconvenient in practice to have junctions on a main line of railway so close together.

The sixth route has the great advantage that it would at once serve flat and cultivated lands in the Arapohue, Raupo, and Ruawai districts. These districts are, in our estimation, reasonably well served by the present river communication, which borders the whole of the lands affected. This connection would have a length of about thirty-four miles, of which nearly one-half would pass through difficult country; and the evidence shows that for some miles this difficult country would be of the same character as that which has already given rise to trouble, involving costly construction, on the existing Main Trunk Railway.

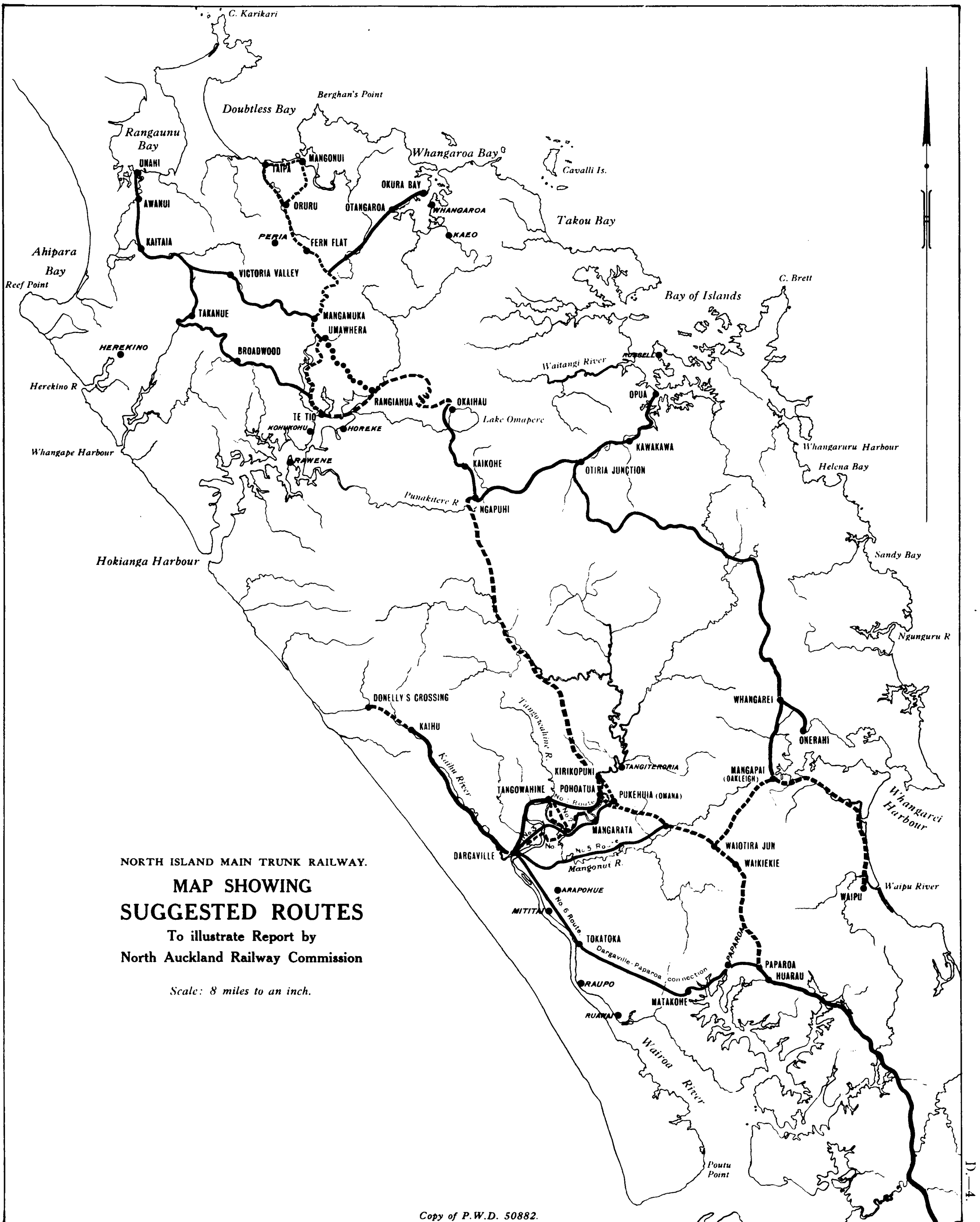
We are of opinion that the flat and valuable lands already served by river navigation would not warrant an expenditure by the State of so large a sum as would be required to construct this railway as compared with either of the shorter routes, numbered 1 and 3, the length of each of which is approximately the same—about thirteen miles.

The No. 3 route (shown in blue on the plan) involves the crossing of the Wairoa River, with the necessity for an opening-bridge, and the advantages to be gained by its adoption are not, in our opinion, warranted as compared with No. 1 route.

We therefore recommend the adoption by the Government of route marked "No. 1," as shown by the full red line on the plan, with an estimated length of approximately thirteen miles. But with this recommendation we couple a suggestion that the Main Trunk line, as authorized between about 117 miles 60 chains and 121 miles 30 chains, should be deviated so as to cross the upper reaches of the Wairoa River and run on the western bank of that river through Pohoatua to Kirikopuni.

The Main Trunk line has to cross the Wairoa River under the authorized scheme at Kirikopuni, and we are informed by the engineers that the borings taken show that the site of a crossing below Pukehuia would be as favourable as at the authorized spot. This deviation would involve the loss of only about £2,000 on work which has already been done on the stretch from Pukehuia to Kirikopuni, and for loss on lands taken for the railway which would not then be needed. The adoption of this deviation of the Main Trunk line, as recommended by the Commission, would mean a saving in duplication of the railway of about two miles, reducing the connecting-line from approximately thirteen miles to about eleven miles, but slightly increasing the length of the Main Trunk line.

We believe that the trade on the Kaihu Valley Railway, and from the town and district of Dargaville, would warrant the construction of this railway so as to connect that detached railway with the Main Trunk line and to give the inhabitants of the Dargaville district a connection with the railway system of the north. We recommend that this work should be proceeded with as soon as labour and materials are available, so that it can be finished, if possible, coincidentally with the completion of the Main Trunk line to Kirikopuni (or to the point of intersection of the suggested deviation with the proposed connection from Dargaville at Pohoatua). We also recommend that the branch line from Waiotira Junction to Oakleigh should be made available as speedily as possible. If this be done the Dargaville district would be placed in railway communication with Whangarei Harbour, and the disadvantages which are suffered through the bar existing at the entrance to the



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Kaipara would be removed, and the district would be brought into direct railway communication with deep-water harbours both at Whangarei and Auckland.

We are of opinion that the completion of this line, as recommended, would supply the requirements of the district lying to the west of the Main Trunk line for many years to come, as the whole of this country would then be within reasonable distance of railway communication.

RAILWAY ROUTES : TE TIO NORTHWARDS

Under the first clause of our order of reference we were directed to inquire into and ascertain the best route along which the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway from Te Tio northwards should be constructed in the interests of the community as a whole, giving due consideration to the development of settlement, engineering questions, and the volume and direction of traffic.

The North Auckland Main Trunk Railway as at present authorized follows, from Okaihau, a valley leading down to the upper waters of the Waihou River, which it is proposed to cross at a point about 65 chains in width ; with a further crossing of the Oriri River—a branch of the Waihou—of about 25 chains in width in order to reach the authorized terminus of the proposed railway at Te Tio—a point at the junction of the Mangamuka River with the Waihou River branch of the Hokianga Harbour. The evidence tendered us at Kohukohu was to the effect that it is desirable to bring the railway to Te Tio in order that there might be an exchange of traffic between the navigation of the Hokianga Harbour and the railways at a deep-water point.

We were not convinced that it was essential in the interests of the Dominion that the railway should be brought to deep water within Hokianga Harbour, if provision was made for it to touch the harbour at such a point that launch and barge traffic could be served at all states of the tide.

Considerable local evidence was adduced by residents of the Umawhera district that a practicable railway-line could be found, starting near Rangiahua and passing across country towards Mangamuka, thus cutting out the connection to Te Tio and shortening the Main Trunk line between Rangiahua Station and Mangamuka by several miles. On our return to Wellington we submitted this proposal to the officers of the Public Works Department, who reported (see Exhibit attached) to the effect that the cost of the two routes would be practically the same, and that, although the Te Tio route is a longer one, it has, apart from the crossing of the rivers, no works likely to involve difficulty in construction, and that it has easy grades and curves ; whereas the shorter route involves two tunnels and considerable curvature and heavy grades. Under these circumstances we have not recommended to Your Excellency that any change should be made in the authorized route as far as Te Tio.

We are of opinion that in the interests of the Dominion it is not at present necessary or desirable that the railway should be extended farther north than Mangamuka.

We have been advised that various roads are in course of construction or are proposed to be laid out which will serve the purposes of road carriage for the northern districts to Mangamuka. In this connection we urge that the Government, with the co-operation of the different local bodies, should arrange for the construction of well-graded and properly formed and metalled main roads, having as their objective the easy transit of live-stock and goods between the proposed terminus at Mangamuka and the northern districts.

Had we at the present time to definitely report upon a route for the extension of the railway to serve the northern districts we would recommend a line running on the Te Karae—Broadwood route, believing that this line would at present serve the greatest amount of valuable land, and the area which is capable of the most development, and is at the same time the least served by water carriage. For this purpose the line would probably deviate from the railway at some point between Te Tio and Mangamuka. We are of the opinion, however, that this line should not be authorized until greater development is indicated in the northern districts, as we cannot foresee in what direction developments are likely to take place.

MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY LINE.

Under the fourth order of reference we were directed to make inquiry into any matter which arose out of or was connected with the main object of the Commission, and presumably we are desired to report thereon. We therefore call the attention of the Government to the fact that when the Dargaville-Pohoatua and Waitotira-Whangarei branch lines are opened, together with the Main Trunk line south of Pohoatua, there will be eventually a through-railway communication not only from Auckland but also from the Dargaville district by the Whangarei-Kaikōhe line of railway to Mangamuka, and that by this line, when completed, the far North will be brought into direct communication with Auckland and the south. Under these circumstances we respectfully express our opinion that the Main Trunk line between Pohoatua (near Pukehuia) and Ngāpuhi will to a great extent duplicate the existing railway system, and there would be, if it should be constructed, three parallel lines of railway in a portion of the country having a total width of less than fifty miles—the Kaihu Valley Railway, the proposed Main Trunk line (Pohoatua-Ngāpuhi), and the Whangarei-Opua Railway.

We are of opinion that the construction of this line of railway (Pohoatua-Ngāpuhi), having a length of some thirty-seven miles, may easily be postponed for many years to come until more labour is available and materials are cheaper. We hold that the money which would be expended in the construction of this portion of the Main Trunk line ought to be diverted to the completion of other railways, including the connection from the Kaihu Valley line to Pohoatua (near Pukehuia), to the construction of the Main Trunk line to Mangamuka, and to the construction of roads leading thereto, as being of more benefit to the Dominion as a whole.

We also consider that it is desirable that at an early date a first-class service road should be constructed on a line somewhat parallel to the proposed Main Trunk route between Pohoatua and Ngāpuhi. The construction of this road would bring all the intervening district within a moderate length of communication with the railway, and would, in our opinion, fulfil all requirements for many years to come.

HARBOURS.

Under the third order of reference we were instructed to inquire into and to ascertain to what port or ports the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway north of Te Tio should be connected, and the extent to which such line of railway should now be constructed in the interests of settlement.

In pursuance of our investigations we visited Rangaunu Bay, at Unahi; Doubtless Bay, at Mangonui and Taipa; and Whangaroa Harbour; and we have decided that for many years to come there will be no need for any extension northwards of the Main Trunk line to either one or other of these harbours. We are largely guided to this conclusion by the fact that there is railway communication—which will shortly be connected with the Main Trunk line—to Opua, on the Bay of Islands; and that there is now under construction near Otiria Junction, a few miles from Opua, freezing-works which should, in our opinion, provide ample means for many years for the handling of the meat produced in the northern districts. The number of cattle and sheep produced or likely to be produced for many years in the district to the north of the Hokianga River and the Bay of Islands will not warrant the construction of other freezing-works in the far North which would require railway connection with a deep-water harbour.

Rangaunu Bay is the best situated of the three harbours in respect to the shipment of the further production of the district, but owing to shoal difficulties in connection therewith it is unlikely that it will ever be made a port for the use of ocean-going vessels.

Doubtless Bay, including Mangonui Harbour, is more favourably situated. But of the three harbours there is no question that Whangaroa Harbour would be the most suitable for ocean-going vessels. If Imperial or other reasons should render it necessary at any time to obtain further deep-water accommodation connected with the railway system of the North Island at a point north of the Bay of Islands we are of opinion that Whangaroa Harbour should be the point selected. In the absence of any demand for the connection of Whangaroa Harbour with the

railway system for Imperial reasons we consider that there is no necessity to make any connection with the railway system other than that at present existing at the Bay of Islands and at Whangarei.

ROAD-MAINTENANCE.

The Commission desires to call Your Excellency's attention to a matter which was forced upon their observation in many districts through which they travelled during the progress of this inquiry. They learnt with regret that many of the roads which had been formed and metalled at a total or partial expense to the Government had been allowed to lapse into a state of disrepair by the local authority responsible for their upkeep, and therefore the expenditure by the State on those roads had been largely thrown away. This loss has occurred through a want of local care and of suitable expenditure of funds at the right time.

We are of opinion that this is a serious matter, and one deserving of grave consideration by your Government, with a view to discovering some method by which roads once constructed and metalled shall be maintained from time to time in a state of efficiency. After making all allowance on account of the difficulties existing owing to the recent war, we are of opinion that this neglect in the maintenance of roads is not an ephemeral matter, but one that has existed over a long period of years.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, we summarize our recommendations as follows:—

- (1.) That the northern route of railway between Dargaville and the Main Trunk line be carried out on the route as shown by the full red line on the attached plan, the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway already authorized between a point south of Pukehuia and Kirikopuni being deviated to the western side of the Wairoa River at a point near Pohoatua.
- (2.) That the Main Trunk line be extended as far as Mangamuka, and at present no further.
- (3.) That the authorized communications by rail to deep water are sufficient.
- (4.) That work be suspended on the Main Trunk line between the proposed junction with the suggested Dargaville Branch at Pohoatua and Ngapuhi, but that a main road be constructed between these points.
- (5.) That means should be devised to ensure that where Government funds have been contributed to form or metal roads such roads should be properly maintained.

We have the honour to transmit herewith the evidence and exhibits submitted to the Commission, and the minutes of our proceedings.

We have, &c.,

WILLIAM FERGUSON, Chairman. [SEAL.]

JOHN BIRD HINE. [SEAL.]

JAMES BEGG. [SEAL.]

Wellington, 15th January, 1921.

Note by Clerk of the House.

The evidence, exhibits, and minutes of proceedings were not laid on the table of the House.

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